



La Voz

Newsletter of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

January 2005

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President's Message

*By Bertha Venegas
NOPHNCSE President*

The year has just begun and already we have plenty of New Year's resolutions.

First, having a successful 2005 National Conference in Lafayette, Louisiana. It is not too late to volunteer and be a part of the planning team. A solid technical program is being planned with a variety of training sessions to meet the needs of all employees.

Second, promoting our scholarship program, distributing information in a timely manner and making sure we have an abundance of students applying. At our last meeting, the council voted to award five (5) one thousand (\$1000) dollar scholarships. Help us get the word out. In addition, be thinking of items to donate to our scholarship fundraising auction. The proceeds go to the scholarship endowment fund, which is nearing the \$50,000 mark.



*Bertha Venegas,
NOPHNCSE
President*

Our membership campaign kicked off in November and I encourage everyone to submit dues in a timely manner so you can exercise your right to vote. The positions of Vice President, Treasurer and regional representatives from the East, South Central and West will be coming open.

Our priorities continue to be recruitment of Hispanic employees and Technical Service Providers, training and leadership development.

As always, feel free to contact me if I can be of service to you.

The National Council, 2004-2005

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2005 NOPHNRCS Training Conference News

by Mario A. Morales, 2005
Conference Planning Team
Chair

Important Information about the 2005 Training Conference

The planning of the 2005 NOPHNRCS Training Conference is going very well. It has been a pleasure to work with the current planning team. This event is scheduled for June 27-30, 2005, in Lafayette, Louisiana. The theme for this conference is "NOPHNRCS...Preparing Leaders and Uniting with Partners to Conserve our Natural Resources."

You can rest assured that this Training Confer-

ence will be motivational, informative and enjoyable. I want to take a moment to again encourage the membership to join us for this event. Please visit with your supervisors and express your interest in attending this training conference.

The conference will consist of professional training sessions, three different Conservation Tours to choose from, discussions of agency issues and opportunities, informative and personal/professional development training

sessions, and some other very interesting presentations. There will also be opportunities for some family activities so consider bringing your family to this event. Please take a moment to read the articles that relate to the 2005 NOPHNRCS Training Conference and consider presenting a Technical Paper or serving as a Moderator for one of the Conference sessions. Please continue to stay abreast of the 2005 Conference information in upcoming issues of the *La Voz*.

Technical Training Opportunities

by Flavio Garza

This year's Annual NOPHNRCS Training Conference will offer a full slate of professional development training sessions.

For the first time we will have a training session on "The History and Traditions of NOPHNRCS" and a session on the organization's Constitution and Bylaws.

There will be numerous other sessions available to our membership.

These sessions will include topics such as: GIS Training, Drip Irrigation, Conservation Tillage, Group Dynamics presentations, Improving your Communication Skills, FERS, CSRS, Grazing Lands Conservation

Initiative, Flexible Spending Accounts, the Conservation Security Program, and some other very interesting personal and professional development presentations.

Please visit with your supervisor and discuss this exciting opportunity. I want to encourage you to make every effort possible to join us at our Annual Training Conference.

Additionally, the Lafayette, Louisiana area is a colorful and fascinating part of the country.

For more information about the Technical Presentations scheduled for our National Training Conference, please feel free to call me at 956-723-6643.

Moderators Needed

By Juan Pena

Volunteers are needed to serve as moderators for our training conference. This could help you brush up on your public speaking skills. If you are uncomfortable speaking in front of large crowds, I can schedule you for the breakout sessions which will be smaller groups of about 25 to 40 or attendees. Those of you who enjoy dressing up and speaking to large crowds, I will schedule you during the general sessions.

If you are interested in volunteering, please either contact your regional representative and have him or her compile a list and forward it to me, or send me your request directly by e-mail to juan.pena@tx.usda.gov. If you prefer by phone, you can reach me at 956-689-2542, Ext. 3.

Going to Cajun Country

The Lafayette, Louisiana Area

By Stacy Crevello

Lafayette is the heart of Acadiana and the capital of Cajun Country. Lafayette lies 15 miles west of the Atchafalaya Basin and 35 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico; it exhibits the subtropical climate typical of southern Louisiana. The city is situated in a geographical area of forests and prairies interlaced with bayous, swamps and marshes.

The environment has shaped the lives of the Cajun people for over 200 years. Current agricultural strong holds of the region include sugarcane, rice, grain varieties, soybeans, and aquaculture farming. Based on the oil industry, this region has developed tremendously in oil production and related industries. This diversified development, however, has not hindered Cajun traditions.

This region of Louisiana has a truly distinct flavor that draws people from all over the world to experience its unique culture, food, and music.

Lafayette is a small metropolis which displays an extraordinary mixture of tradition and progressiveness. Having a rich French heritage blended with Spanish, American, Indian and African influences, the city represents

a colorful combination of lifestyles.

The small towns surrounding Lafayette offer a slice of Cajun life that remains very true to the culture.

There are many magnificent old plantation homes along the Bayou Teche that can be viewed in the small quaint towns that have historically thrived along the lazy bayou. In towns such as Breaux Bridge, St. Martinville, Ville Platte, and Grand Coteau, one can learn the secrets of Cajun cooking while dining in local restaurants along beautiful bayous. Local Cajun and Zydeco music can be enjoyed in the many dance halls and restaurants of the area. The Cajun way of life prides itself in family and community based activities such as festivals and outdoor events that can be enjoyed by young and old alike.

We look forward to welcoming NOPHNRCSE Training Conference participants to the “heart of Cajun country” and are certain that you and your families will enjoy the area, culture, and environment while you prepare yourselves for future career opportunities and further develop your professional and leadership skills.

Award Nominations

By Tony Resendez

The Awards Committee is asking for the NOPHNRCSE membership to begin thinking for potential award nominees. The nomination forms, as well as the nomination guidelines, will be posted on the website during the month of February.

Categories are as follows: Leadership, Visionary, Natural Resources Conservation, Outstanding Member and Amiga/Amigo. Questions currently on the nomination form are as follows: Why this person should be considered for this award, NOPHNRCSE participation and support, NRCS responsibilities and contributions.

Nominators and nominees must be members in good standing.

Quotable Quote

Knowledge is happiness, because to have knowledge—broad, deep knowledge—is to know true ends from false, and lofty things from low. To know the thoughts and deeds that have marked man's progress is to feel the great heart-throbs of humanity through the centuries; and if one does not feel in these pulsations a heavenward striving, one must indeed be deaf to the harmonies of life.

Helen Keller (1880-1968), U.S. blind/deaf author, lecturer.



Pay Membership Dues by January 31

Students Needed

*By Rick Rodriguez and
Russell Castro*

The Student Participation committee is looking for about 10 college students who are interested in a career with NRCS to attend this year's conference. Attendance at this Conference will provide the best qualified students with an opportunity to meet other NRCS professionals and NOPHNRCSE members.

The Student Participation committee is asking for the membership's help in finding these students.

Funds have been set aside to assist with their attendance to the conference. Each student should provide a resume and a personal statement. [The Personal Statement should describe their personal and career goals, extra curricular activities, current school and major, and current GPA.] The Personal Statement should be between 350 to 500 words in length (double-spaced). The due date is March 18, 2005.

For more information, contact either Russell Castro (254.742.9982) or Rick Rodriguez (254.742.9894). Please have all submissions sent to Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez, in care of USDA-NRCS; 101 South Main Street; Temple, Texas 78628.

Your assistance is important to the NOPHNRCSE organization and is appreciated.

Pay Your Membership Dues

By Astrid Martinez, Membership Committee Chair

This is just a reminder to pay your dues by Jan 31, 2005. By being a member in good standing you can participate in the election process and be eligible to hold any position in the National Council. Members in good standing are those paid as of January 31, 2005. Envelops post marked as Jan 31, 2005 will count as good standing members. For those of you that had already sent your payment and those in payroll deduction, THANKS!

If you need a membership form please go to our website <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/> and download a copy today.

Nominations: Cast Your Ballot

By Luis Gamboa, Nominations Committee Co-Chairperson

As stated in Article 10 of the NOPHNRCSE Constitution (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/constitution.html>), all officers and regional representatives will be elected for two-year terms. This year Vice President, Treasurer, West, South Central, and South East Regional Reps are up for election. So, now is the time to begin thinking about who will fill the mentioned positions. Keep in mind members submitting nomination(s), nominees accepting nominations, and members wanting to vote in the election process need to be in "good standing." "Good standing" means that membership dues are paid by January 31, 2005, or have opted for payroll deduction.

2005 ELECTION TIMETABLE:

January 21, 2005 - Send out request for nominations to members

February 4, 2005 - Due date for nominations forms

February 25, 2005 - Send out voting ballot to members

March 18, 2005 - Due date to receive ballot forms

April 8, 2005 - *Send out voting ballot for runoff

April 29, 2005 - *Due date to receive runoff ballot forms

For more information, contact

Luis Gamboa (Co-Chair) at:

Phone: (home - 970.266.1990);

(work - 970.254.5418)

FAX: (home - 720.294.7027); (work - 970.254.5544)

Email: (home - lgamboa_nm@yahoo.com);

(work - lgamboa@itc.nrcs.usda.gov)

Note: all due dates are postmarked due dates; and * denotes as optional - if needed due to a tie.



Jose Acevedo Retires

After 34 years with the greatest agency in the government, I decided to retire on Dec. 31st and return to my beautiful Island, Puerto Rico.

It was not an easy decision, but a wise one. It has been a wonderful journey, full of countless great memories. I never thought that a son of a very humble family, with a lot of limited resources, would one day retire from a position in the government that I had never dreamed of. I am proud as a Hispanic, as a "Puertorriqueño," and as a NRCS employee to be a member of the Senior Executive Service. My sincere and deepest appreciation from the bottom of my heart goes to all my fellow coworkers who really helped me to accomplish my goals. In every place or location that I have moved to, I have always found a person that was willing to assist me. If I had to do this again, I would do it the same way and in the same places that I did.

I am returning to Puerto Rico on Dec. 25th. Just remember that you all have "unamigo" in Puerto Rico. Raquel and I will be honored with your visit. (We really mean it). I am also signing up as a volunteer; if I can help, I will be there.

Jose Joaquin Acevedo

Long-time
NRCSer Retires

Another Education Opportunity

Harvard President Lawrence H. Summers announced in February 2004 a major new initiative designed to encourage talented students from families of low and moderate income to attend Harvard College. While the new initiative has four major components, including recruitment, admissions, and a summer academic program designed to prepare talented students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds for college, the financial aid component increases aid for students from low and moderate income families. Beginning with the 2004-05 year, parents in families with incomes of less than \$40,000 will no longer be expected to contribute to the cost of attending Harvard for their children. In addition, Harvard will reduce the contributions expected of families with incomes between \$40,000 and \$60,000.

The University has earmarked \$2 million in new financial aid funds to cover this expanded aid next year, bringing its total annual scholarship budget for undergraduates to just under \$80 million. The new initiative, which will take effect next fall for all students - entering and returning - is expected to benefit more than 1000 families on an annual basis. The new financial aid initiative is the latest step in a progressive expansion of financial aid at Harvard in recent years. Harvard College's nearly \$80 million in scholarships for undergraduates in the coming year represents a 49% increase over the past six years when inflation rose by only 13.5%. This increase in scholarship aid has reduced the average student loan debt upon graduation to \$8,800 for the Class of 2003, a figure well below the national average of close to \$20,000.

Take a Parliamentary Procedure Refresher

Submitted by: Tamara L. Buitenwerf

Have you ever been in charge of running a meeting? All of us have at least sat in a meeting before.

What procedure was used to run the meeting efficiently? Parliamentary procedure is based on the rights of people whether it is an individual or a group. It can be a very important tool to help run fair, orderly and smooth business meetings.

As a professional organization that conducts numerous meetings, it seemed that a short quiz taken from Rod G Davidson, Professional Registered Parliamentarian, would be an appropriate refresher. The quiz is on the following page.



Rate Yourself with this Parliamentary Procedure Quiz

Take a Parliamentary Prodedure Quiz

1. _____ is used to obtain information about meeting procedure.
 - a. Parliamentary Inquiry
 - b. Point of Information
 - c. Point of Order
2. Previous Question means _____.
 - a. Call for the assembly to return to the agenda
 - b. If adopted by a two-thirds vote, debate ends and a vote is immediately taken
 - c. A request for the secretary to read the motion aloud
3. Other than the Articles of Incorporation, the highest body of rules in an organization are _____.
 - a. Robert's Rules of Order
 - b. Bylaws
 - c. Standing rules
4. A quorum is _____.
 - a. The largest number that can be expected to attend a meeting, except in bad weather
 - b. A majority of the members present
 - c. The minimum number of members who must be present for business to be transacted
5. A main motion _____.
 - a. Brings business before the assembly
 - b. Cannot be amended
 - c. Is the highest ranking motion
6. If a member makes a motion that is not in order, _____.
 - a. he should be censured
 - b. he should be ruled out of order by the chair
 - c. The chair may suggest an alternate motion
7. If the bylaws require an election to be by ballot, _____.
 - a. A voice vote can be used if there is no objection and there is only one nominee for each office
 - b. This provision can be suspended by unanimous consent, and a rising vote used instead
 - c. This provision cannot be suspended, even by a unanimous vote
8. Division of the question means _____.
 - a. To separate a motion into two or more parts, each capable of standing as separate motions
 - b. To retake a voice vote by a rising vote
 - c. To have members who favor a motion and those who oppose it to move to opposite sides of the room
9. The motion to Lay on the Table can be used to _____.
 - a. Kill a motion
 - b. Temporarily set aside a motion because something of immediate urgency has arisen, without a time to set to resume its consideration
 - c. postpone consideration of a motion until the next meeting, in order to find out additional information

The answers are as follows: A-B-B-C-A-C-C-A-B. So, how did you do? To some members, this information will come naturally and is something that is put into practice often. For the majority of us, parliamentary procedure is unfamiliar territory. Be challenged this month to learn parliamentary procedure and put it into practice with NOPHNRCSE or any other organization where meetings are held. For some helpful information, take a look at <http://www.parlipro.org>.



Meet your
Conference
Planning
Chairs

2005 Training Conference Chairs

Conference Planning Team Chairperson

Mario A. Morales

Conference Planning Team Co-Chairperson

Donna J. Remides

Budget

Faye A. Williams

Conservation Tour

Paul McQuade

Banquets/Breaks

Jose Valadez

Program

Tony Garcia

Scholarship Night

Adolfo Diaz

Local Arrangements

Stacy Crevello

Awards

Tony Resendez

Technical Presentations

Juan C. Hernandez

Equipment

Louis Gamboa

Hospitality Room

Tony Carrizales

Moderators

Juan Pena

Publicity

Kristina Wiley

Registration

Stella Santos

Speakers

Oscar Marroquin

Student Participation

Rick Rodriguez

Concurrent Sessions

Flavio Garza

Employee Meeting/Taste of Louisiana

Donna J. Remides

Logistics

Randolph Joseph Jr.

2005 Scholarships

By Adolfo Diaz

Thanks to the Scholarship Auction, donations, and other activities, the Scholarship and Endowment Committee has been able to increase the number of scholarships from three to five. The scholarship amount of \$700 has been increased to \$1,000 per scholarship in order to keep up with increasing tuition and book costs.

The committee has been active in marketing these scholarships, but asks members to help spread the word to friends, family, and local institutions.

Full scholarship application information can be found on the next page.

A New Year's Letter from our President

Dear Friends,

It is that time of year when we look within ourselves and evaluate how we have done, what we would like to do different, and what we would like to accomplish in the coming year. I am happy to say that I am very blessed for everything I have, first my family and friends and secondly an opportunity to advance the goals of our organization.

I encourage you to renew your membership and this is why. As a founding member of this organization, I believe that in order to meet the needs and demands of the growing Hispanic population in conservation of natural resources, we must first ask ourselves why we

work for the agency and what is important to us. Helping the people that provide our food and fiber is very rewarding, but having the passion to help Hispanics succeed is even more rewarding. I want to give back and continue the success of our people in conservation. I am grateful to those who have helped me along the way and I plan to do the same for those whom I can help. Let us continue to take pride in what we do and help lead others in support of our issues.

The fact remains that Hispanics within NRCS are underrepresented at every level. Moreover, as our population continues

to grow, we must find ways to involve the Hispanic community in the programs we administer.

Each one of us has a strong belief in what we do. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is who we are and our livelihood. Together we can make our organization a catalyst in how our agency will look now and in the future.

We need your input and help in this endeavor. I encourage you to join us as we make monumental strides toward the betterment of everyone.

I wish you a prosperous New Year!

Bertha T. Venegas
President



2005 NOPHNCSE Scholarship Announcement

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNCSE) provides scholarships to deserving Hispanic students that wish to pursue or are pursuing a Bachelors degree in a natural resources or a natural resources conservation-related field of study at an accredited four-year institution.

Four scholarships of \$1,000 each will be awarded to graduating high school students accepted to an accredited college of university or registered students in their first through third years.

In addition, The Martha Guerra-Arteaga Scholarship of \$1,000.00 will be awarded to one female student majoring in public affairs or a natural resources conservation-related field of study.

Candidates selected to receive the 2005 NOPHNCSE Scholarship will also have the opportunity to attend the 2005 NOPHNCSE annual conference with the majority of the expenses paid.

Help spread the
word about
NOPHNCSE
scholarships

2005 Scholarship Application

Please complete this application (print legibly) and submit it with all of the items requested to:

Adolfo Diaz, Chairman
NOPHNCSE Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee
8030 Excelsior Drive
Madison, WI 53719

Complete application package must be postmarked by April 1, 2005. Incomplete or late applications will not be evaluated.

Circle one: Mr. Mrs. Miss Ms.

Name: _____

Permanent Address: _____

City, State, and Zip: _____

Mailing Address (if different from above):

Telephone: _____ Birth Date (Mo./Day/Yr.): _____

Birth Place (State and Country): _____

Name and address of High School or
College you are currently attending: _____

GPA (on a 4.0 scale): _____ U.S. Citizenship: ____ Yes ____ No
Note: Your scholarship application will not be processed without proof of U.S. citizenship.



Scholarship Application continued

Name of the college, organization or person from which you received this application.

Name: _____

The following items must be submitted along with this signed application form. Failure to submit a complete 2005 NOPHNCSE scholarship application package will result in you forfeiting any opportunity to be selected for a 2005 scholarship. The following items constitute a complete 2005 NOPHNCSE scholarship application package:

Scholarship
application
continued.

1. Submit this completed application with your signature;
2. Submit a personal statement of *350 to 500 words in length (double-spaced)*. Please include information such as personal and career goals and extra curricular activities. You may also include other information that you feel is important;
3. Submit a copy of an official or certified high school or college transcript;
4. Submit two letters of recommendation from a high school teacher(s)/counselor(s) or college professor(s); and
5. Proof of U.S. citizenship (copy of birth certificate or naturalization certificate).
6. Graduating high school applicants submit a copy of a letter of acceptance from the college you plan to attend.

**** Note:** Receipt of a NOPHNCSE Scholarship does not constitute a guarantee of future employment with the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other federal agency.

Certification: I certify that all of the information provided is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Purposely providing false information may result in the recall of any scholarship granted or in the forfeiture of any scholarship awarded.

I am aware that any scholarship awarded by NOPHNCSE will be disbursed through my University Financial Aid Office. If I am selected to receive a NOPHNCSE Scholarship, I will utilize the NOPHNCSE award toward expenses related to my college attendance. Also, I understand that if I receive an award, there is no guarantee of renewal. I must reapply for a new scholarship each year.

I understand that proof of college enrollment will be required if selected and that I must notify my University Financial Aid Office and NOPHNCSE of any changes to my enrollment status. I further understand that changes to my enrollment status may result in the cancellation of any award provided. I hereby acknowledge that it is my responsibility to keep my institution's Financial Aid Office and NOPHNCSE informed of all address changes.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to submit a complete application package to NOPHNCSE in compliance with the posted deadline. Incomplete or late application materials will result in my scholarship application package not being considered for any award. All application materials become the property of NOPHNCSE. I hereby give NOPHNCSE permission to share this information for the purpose of recruitment, public relations, or possible employment.

I hereby certify that I have read the application information and guidelines, as well as this Certification, and that I understand and accept all of the conditions specified. Failure to sign this Certification will result in my ineligibility for this Scholarship Award.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



2005 Scholarship Information, Guidelines

Scholarship Information and Guidelines

The United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) was first organized in 1933, as the Soil Erosion Service and was later known as the Soil Conservation Service. In 1994, USDA went through reorganization and the Agency's name became the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Agency's purpose has always been, and continues to be, the promotion of the conservation and wise use of our country's natural resources. USDA-NRCS employees possess backgrounds in a variety of disciplines that include - agronomy, agricultural engineering, animal science, civil engineering, computer science, crops science, hydrology, range science, soil science, wildlife science, and several other disciplines.

NRCS accomplishes its conservation goals by drawing upon the various sciences and conservation disciplines to help private landowners conserve their soil, natural resources and water resources. NRCS employees and private landusers assess the land's capabilities and resources along with the existing conservation problems and opportunities. NRCS employees then work closely with agricultural producers and landowners to assist them in developing conservation plans and with the implementation of conservation practices while achieving their production goals and objectives. Through the implementation of conservation practices, the overall quality of life within a watershed and across our country is improved.

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNRCSE) was established as a Professional Society of Natural Resources Conservation Service employees. NOPHNRCSE promotes the belief that Hispanics can and should fill an existing, invaluable void in the protection of our country's natural resources and the wise use of our agricultural and recreational private lands. NOPHNRCSE was created to assist the USDA-NRCS with its delivery of Program Information and Program Benefits to minority and non-minority communities; to showcase the value that Hispanics bring to the USDA-NRCS; to demonstrate the role of Hispanics in a diverse, multi-cultural workforce; and to serve as a strong link between the USDA-NRCS and the Hispanic community.

USDA-NRCS has recognized the fact that Hispanics are the most under-represented group within the Agency. The USDA-NRCS leadership also recognizes that Hispanics are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population and that many of today's agricultural producers come from Hispanic backgrounds. NOPHNRCSE was organized to augment the outreach programs of USDA and NRCS, and to improve and enhance USDA Program Delivery. Internally, NOPHNRCSE has vowed to assist USDA-NRCS achieve a multicultural workforce and to assist with the recruitment and professional development of quality NRCS Hispanic employees.

USDA-NRCS and NOPHNRCSE recognizes that Hispanics face a daunting educational challenge and that Hispanics continue to be severely under-represented in our nation's colleges and universities. Hispanics also continue to be under-represented in the natural resources and natural resources conservation field of study. With this Scholarship Program, NOPHNRCSE achieves one of its founding goals, "to develop and establish a NOPHNRCSE Scholarship & Endowment Fund." NOPHNRCSE intends to support Hispanics goals of higher education and to encourage Hispanics to become protectors of our country's natural resources through this Scholarship Program.

NOPHNRCSE wishes to provide scholarships to deserving Hispanic students who wish to pursue, are currently enrolled in, or are admitted to an accredited four year institution with the intent of earning a Bachelor of Science degree in a natural resources field or a natural resources conservation related field of study.

Candidates selected to receive the 2005 NOPHNRCSE Scholarship will be selected on the basis of academic achievement, personal strengths, demonstrated leadership abilities, and career goals. The NOPHNRCSE Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee is organized and administered by the NOPHNRCSE National Council.